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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE SITUATION IN BURUNDI

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1072 (1996) of 30 August 1996, in which the Council decided to re-examine the question of Burundi on 31 October 1996 and requested me to report by that time on the situation in Burundi, including on the status of the immediate and unconditional negotiations which the Council required all of Burundi's political parties and factions without exception, whether inside or outside the country and including representatives of civil society to initiate, with a view to reaching a comprehensive political settlement.

2. Furthermore, in paragraph 7 of resolution 1072 (1996), the Security Council requested me, in consultation with the international community, to undertake preparations when appropriate for the convening of a pledging conference to assist in the reconstruction and development of Burundi following the achievement of a comprehensive political settlement.

3. In paragraph 8 of resolution 1072 (1996), the Council encouraged me, in consultation with all those concerned, including the neighbouring States, other Member States, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and international humanitarian organizations, to establish mechanisms to ensure the safe and timely delivery of humanitarian relief throughout Burundi.

4. In paragraph 12 of resolution 1072 (1996), the Council encouraged me and Member States to continue to facilitate contingency planning for an international presence and other initiatives to support and help consolidate a cessation of hostilities, as well as to make a rapid humanitarian response in the event of widespread violence or a serious deterioration in the humanitarian situation in Burundi.

5. Since the adoption of resolution 1072 (1996), my Personal Representative has made regular oral reports to the Council.

6. The present report was drawn up using information available to the Secretariat on 22 October 1996. An addendum concerning developments in the past few days will be issued shortly.

II. POLITICAL SITUATION

7. One of the most important developments in the political situation since the coup d'état of 25 July 1996 has been the determination shown by the new regime to consolidate its power and comply with the requirements of the countries of the subregion for the lifting of the sanctions. Security Council resolution 1072 (1996) maintained the sanctions, strongly condemned the coup d'état which had overthrown Burundi's legal authorities and at the same time invited the parties to the conflict to lay down their weapons and to enter resolutely into serious negotiations for the restoration of peace.

8. In order to consolidate its position as ruler of the State of Burundi and comply with the requirements of the international community, the Government of President Pierre Buyoya has announced and taken a number of measures. For example, the Chiefs of the General Staff of the Army and the Gendarmerie cited in the report of the International Commission of Inquiry in Burundi have been removed from their posts. However, it should be noted that no inquiry or legal proceedings seem yet to have been instituted in the case of these two officers. President Buyoya has also adopted an Action Plan, which the Prime Minister made public on 4 September 1996. He took a decision to restore the National Assembly in its original form and to lift the ban on political parties. One month later, however, it is obvious that the Assembly has not been restored with all its pre-coup d'état powers, regulations and responsibilities in place. The same is true of the political parties, for their freedom of action is severely restricted. But these measures do show that a step has been taken in the right direction.

9. Although theoretically restored in its earlier form, the National Assembly has only just resumed its work. It should be emphasized in this connection that the functioning of this body, which is the only State institution to retain a measure of constitutional legitimacy, risks being seriously compromised by the exile of a large number of its elected members and the members who were nominated to take their places. Furthermore, although the President of the National Assembly, Mr. Léonce Ngendakumana, has at last returned to his Residence, the former President of the Republic, Mr. Sylvestre Ntibantunganya, is still at the Residence of the Ambassador of the United States in Bujumbura, where he took refuge.

10. In preparation for the Third Arusha Regional Summit on Burundi scheduled for 12 October, President Buyoya has stepped up his contacts with some members of the diplomatic corps and special envoys in the Great Lakes region. For example, he met in Bujumbura Mr. Wolpe and Mr. Ajello (Special Envoys of the United States and the European Union respectively) and my own Special Envoy, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, in order to clarify his position on the opening of negotiations and lifting of the sanctions.

11. However, the heads of State of the region, convinced that the sanctions had an immediate and tangible impact in terms of political pressure and noting that, regrettably, serious negotiations have not yet begun between all the parties, decided on 12 October to keep the sanctions in place.

12. Today the sanctions against Burundi prompt in diplomatic observers two types of reaction, or two approaches. On the one hand there are the advocates of the firm approach, who think that the sanctions must be maintained more or less in their present form until the new regime clearly and unequivocally initiates the process of negotiation. And then there are the supporters of the lifting of the embargo, who consider that the measures for the restoration of the National Assembly and political parties must be regarded as positive initiatives and that it is important to give these initiatives a broader welcome than the one offered by the States of the region when they relaxed the sanctions a little and authorized the import of fertilizers and seeds.

13. With regard to initiating negotiations with the armed rebels, the new regime stated that it was willing to join in any effort to restore peace. The Conseil national de défense de la démocratie (CNDD) also indicated its readiness to begin negotiations to end the hostilities, although with the qualification that it would negotiate only with representatives who had not participated in the events of October 1993. Contradictory statements on all sides at times suggest that there is no genuine and firm determination to begin serious political discussions immediately. The prevailing impression is that each side is seeking to consolidate its position. The Burundi armed forces currently are recruiting an estimated 5,000 to 7,000 additional men and are training some 2,000 high school graduates, which would bring the size of the Burundi army to nearly 30,000 troops. This figure shows that the army, thus far comprised primarily of a single ethnic group, has virtually doubled in size in one year. The provincial governments are continuing to grow more militant. This trend is often unwelcome, as was demonstrated by the assassination on 22 October of the military governor of Cibitoke province and the four soldiers accompanying him. The CNDD, too, has begun in recent months to bolster its military capability significantly.

14. It is undoubtedly against this background that one must view the initiatives being taken by certain elements of Burundi society that are demanding the disclosure of the truth concerning the October 1993 genocide, as well as the Government's recent decision to establish a national commission to take action in the light of the recent report of the International Commission of Inquiry for Burundi. Such initiatives are consistent with the attention being focused on impunity and injustice, two themes which pervade political discourse in Burundi and which were highlighted once again on 21 October during the commemoration of the third anniversary of the assassination of President Melchior Ndadaye.

15. The leaders of the subregion met in Arusha on 12 October, together with the facilitator, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, and the Secretary-General of OAU, to review the political situation and the implementation of the economic sanctions. On that occasion, they announced in a joint communiqué that President Buyoya and Mr. Léonard Nyangoma (neither of whom were invited to Arusha after all) had written to President Nyerere and the heads of State of the region solemnly

confirming that they were both prepared to take part in unconditional negotiations. The communiqué also stated that the participants (the Presidents of Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia and the Prime Ministers of Cameroon, Ethiopia and Zaire) would take appropriate measures against any group or faction that refuses to participate in the negotiations or hinders the peace process. The communiqué stated that the negotiations were to begin the following month, pursuant to the Mwanza Peace Process, and that the preparations for them were to begin immediately. The communiqué added that the leaders of the subregion had decided to send a ministerial mission consisting of Cameroon, Kenya, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zaire to Bujumbura to monitor the implementation of the Arusha decisions.

16. The Arusha Summit confirmed that the sanctions would remain in effect until the negotiation process was well under way, but also, that the States of the region would react positively if the new regime became seriously involved in the negotiation process. In Bujumbura, the Government immediately reacted to the decision to maintain the sanctions by expressing its profound disappointment and warning the international community of the explosive situation in the subregion. Moreover, it asserted that the sanctions were an obstacle to negotiations and that, consequently, it would not join the peace talks until the sanctions had been lifted.

17. Against this background, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the countries of the region met in Dar-es-Salaam to decide how to respond to the reaction of the Burundi regime: they initially decided to cancel or postpone their ministerial mission, which was to have gone to Bujumbura on 16 October. However, they changed their minds when, a few days later, the Government, reacting favourably to the initiatives of the United Nations and OAU, issued a communiqué stating that the mission would be welcome. The ministerial visit, which took place on 18 October, helped to defuse the situation somewhat.

III. SECURITY SITUATION

18. Since my last report, the security situation has remained precarious and a matter of grave concern to the new regime, which has asserted its desire to restore peace and security during the transition period.

19. In Bujumbura, gang activity and endemic terror are noticeably decreasing; armed attacks against expatriates and thefts of foreigners' vehicles have virtually ceased. This development can be credited to the new authorities, who have implemented a policy to dismantle gang networks, which had been well known and even protected.

20. Unfortunately, this improvement has not reached the rest of the country, where insecurity continues to be a constant fact of life. Thus, the provinces in the north-west (Cibitoke, Bubanza and Kayanza), which border the rebel sanctuary in the Kinira forest and are near the borders of eastern Zaire and south-western Rwanda, are virtually inaccessible for humanitarian aid purposes. Until very recently, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) tracked movements of people fleeing towards Zaire and the United Republic of Tanzania to escape the confrontations between the rebels and

the armed forces. Hospital centres continue to receive military and civilian casualties from this region, many of them victims of anti-personnel mines. Military vehicles reportedly have been blown up by mines. Similarly, reported ambushes against military personnel and civilians have turned RN2, the road between Bugarama and Gitega, into one of the most dangerous and deadly roads in the country. This is the road on which Msgr. Joachim Ruhuna, the Archbishop of Gitega, lost his life. The persons who committed this unspeakable crime have yet to be identified.

21. On 3 and 4 September the rebels attempted an attack on the capital. This attempt prompted major reprisals by the forces of order in the rural suburbs of Bujumbura; combat helicopters and heavy weapons were used, a sign of the scope of the confrontation. The official announcement that 100 rebels were killed, and the fact that no prisoners were taken and few weapons were seized, illustrate the complexity of this armed conflict, which has neither victor nor vanquished but is claiming many lives, particularly among the civilian population, as it drags on. In Kabezi, a fishing port in rural Bujumbura, several homes recently were burned down; in Makamba province, more precisely, in the provincial capital, young Hutus, according to their parents, reportedly have fled to unknown destinations.

22. The armed forces are continuing their combing and pursuit operations in the rural areas of Bujumbura, where the authorities have learned of the existence of "parallel governments" led by rebel forces which have been stepping up their attacks on electrical installations. Thus, a large part of the city still is without electricity, indicating that the army's efforts to provide the installations with physical protection do not always have the desired results.

23. Since the coup d'état of 25 July, the Burundi army has reported rebel infiltrations across the supposedly closed borders with Zaire and the United Republic of Tanzania. In any event, there have been no reports of rebel movements occasioning large-scale attacks; rather, by all accounts the rebels have decided to base themselves in certain areas from which it is difficult to flush them out. This is the case, for example, in the areas of Muramvaya and Gitega and some north-western provinces.

IV. HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS

24. The United Nations supported the sanctions imposed on Burundi but stated that it was concerned about the serious consequences which their application might have on the humanitarian aid activities if the United Nations bodies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) did not enjoy clearly established exemptions. The subsequent embargo has in fact complicated the task of the organizations furnishing assistance to the people affected by the war.

25. During the first week of August the Tanzanian and Kenyan Governments closed their airspace and borders with Burundi and banned the transit through their territory of goods bound for Burundi. During the following week Cameroon, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Uganda, Zaire and Zambia took similar action.

26. In the days immediately after the entry into force of the sanctions people swooped down on stocks of the basic foodstuffs. On 5 August the Kenyan authorities refused to authorize a United Nations-chartered aircraft from Bujumbura to land at Nairobi - the first sign of the stringency with which the sanctions would be applied. However, the United Nations subsequently secured the opening of a Nairobi-Bujumbura-Nairobi air corridor twice a week, on Thursdays and Sundays. This corridor is open to the humanitarian personnel of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations and to the entire diplomatic community.

27. Service stations soon ran short of petrol throughout the country, and the Government imposed strict fuel-rationing measures. Like all the non-military elements of the population, non-governmental and humanitarian organizations are initially entitled to only 20 litres of petrol per vehicle per month.

28. In view of the severe fuel shortage the United Nations bodies had established a common logistical service to pool deliveries of available supplies. The World Food Programme (WFP) and UNHCR are taking responsibility, as far as possible, for deliveries of humanitarian aid on behalf of the other United Nations and non-governmental organizations. WFP is coordinating the requests received from these organizations for the transport of additional supplies and foodstuffs, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is taking care of requests for goods other than foodstuffs and the World Health Organization (WHO) is responding to requests for medical supplies.

29. On 16 August the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zaire met in Kampala to consider the question of the application of the sanctions. They agreed to establish a Regional Sanctions Coordination Committee, whose function would be to coordinate the activities of the national sanctions implementation committees. The Ministers decided that initially only medicines and foodstuffs destined expressly for the Rwandan refugees still in Burundi would be exempt from the sanctions.

30. The United Nations Resident Coordinator in Kenya, designated by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to coordinate with the neighbouring States all matters connected with the sanctions, urged the Regional Sanctions Coordination Committee to grant limited exemptions on humanitarian grounds so that humanitarian aid could be brought to the vulnerable people in Burundi.

31. At its next meeting, held in Arusha on 6 September, the Committee agreed that certain concerns of a humanitarian nature were justified and it granted major exemptions. It authorized the humanitarian bodies to import urgent medical items and laboratory equipment, as well as food supplements for infants and hospital patients. And, crucially, it granted the United Nations the right to import limited quantities of fuel for the distribution of these goods. It also authorized, as pointed out above, twice-weekly humanitarian flights between Nairobi and Bujumbura. WFP is currently responsible for coordination of fuel needs. These exemptions from the sanctions on humanitarian grounds have been welcomed, but the import of other articles regarded as useful remains prohibited. The United Nations is still trying to obtain exemptions for

foodstuffs in general and other items such as blankets, flexible plastic sheeting and water-purification and sanitation materials.

32. The Committee's second meeting, in Kigali on 25 September, was devoted mainly to political questions, for the States of the region had, amongst other things, agreed to recommend the import of limited amounts of vegetable seeds and fertilizers for non-commercial crops. This recommendation was made following the decisions of the new regime in Bujumbura to re-establish the National Assembly and political parties.

33. Although the Committee responded favourably to a joint request of the United Nations and the community of humanitarian non-governmental organizations concerning a bulk consignment of fuel, the order has still not yet been received.

34. The exemptions granted by the Committee for medicines have not prevented serious shortages in the health sector. Stocks of medicines are at a very low level in some provinces and, owing to the fuel shortage, it has not been possible to carry out missions to assess the needs. Stocks of poliomyelitis vaccine have been exhausted since the end of the September and, although limited quantities have since been sent by air, there is a serious risk that the vaccination chain will be broken. A small quantity of tuberculosis vaccine has finally been delivered, but the shortage of this vaccine remains extremely worrying. Furthermore, UNICEF has still not received from Kigali the delivery of kerosene which it was expecting. Unless a delivery arrives very shortly, the cold chains will be seriously affected.

35. Although there are only about 200 Rwandese refugees still in the country, UNHCR reports that refugees are still entering Burundi from eastern Zaire. More than 700 have crossed the border since the conflict erupted last month between the Zairian Tutsis and elements of the Zairian army. Many of the people who fled the fighting have entered the Burundian province of Cibitoke, where there is unrest, and will be transported by the Burundi Government to a UNHCR camp being prepared at Gihanga, about 15 kilometres north of Bujumbura airport.

36. The recommendations of the technical support mission of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, which arrived in Burundi at the beginning of August, have been accepted. The Department is now following up the mission's proposals, including the assignment of additional personnel and improvement of the logistical and telecommunications support.

V. HUMAN RIGHTS

37. Since my last report, the human rights mission of observers deployed in Burundi on 19 April 1996 by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has pursued its activities, although these have been somewhat curtailed owing to the political disturbances. The rationing of fuel at the outset and above all the persistent deterioration of security conditions in Burundi have prevented the five observers from travelling as freely as they would have liked in the provinces to conduct the inquiries and investigations required by the situation.

38. As in the preceding months, the mission of observers continues to received numerous allegations of massacres, killings, infringements of personal freedom and security, forced disappearances and arbitrary detentions in the interior of Burundi, especially in the provinces of Muramvya, Gitega, Kayanza, Cibitoke and Bubanza, allegations which are difficult or take a long time to verify because of the aforementioned security constraints. The mission has noted that such violations are to a large extent attributable to members of the armed forces. Nonetheless, a number of lethal incidents and massacres continue to be perpetrated by the rebels. In addition, the clashes between the army and the rebels in the interior of the country, especially in rural Bujumbura, are causing fear in all parts of Burundi society.

39. The prison situation is far from improving. The number of detainees keeps increasing and the conditions of their detention remain of concern. It will be recalled that the first cases, tried during the two sessions held by the three criminal chambers of Burundi in February-March and last June, often took place without the defendants' having access to any legal aid whatever and led to more than 80 death sentences.

40. During his most recent mission to Burundi, from 1 to 17 July 1996, the Special Rapporteur observed numerous defects in the system of administration of justice and noted that justice was being dispensed very rapidly, without the defendants' having been properly informed of the charges against them. Since the fight against impunity is an absolute priority in Burundi in order to re-establish a State subject to the rule of law, my Special Representative in Burundi and the High Commissioner have launched, at the request of the Burundi authorities and the Bar Association, an international judicial assistance project under the first phase of which a number of foreign lawyers will assist both defendants and civil parties, side by side with their Burundi colleagues. This project, for which the operational office of the High Commissioner will serve as focal point, is intended to expedite the examination of at least 540 cases currently pending before the criminal chambers of Ngozi, Gitega and Bujumbura. The next session of the criminal chambers is scheduled in theory for October.

41. Within the framework of the activities to strengthen the Burundi judicial system, the operational office of the High Commissioner is organizing between July 1996 and January 1997 four sessions to train and retrain magistrates and officers of the judicial police and one four-week session for registrars and clerks of the court. It is also helping in the revision of the Criminal Code and the Code of Penal Procedures.

42. The human rights observers are trying to keep in continuing contact with the transitional authorities and the local authorities and to submit regular reports on their activities to interested Governments and the international organizations and agencies concerned. The human rights operation in Burundi, it should be stressed, is but one of the components of a coherent and comprehensive strategy put in place by the international community to promote concerted efforts towards a national dialogue between all the parties to the Burundi conflict and to help the country to settle the crisis.

43. The High Commissioner for Human Rights is firmly convinced that the mission of observers can play a definite stabilizing role in the present situation in Burundi. With this in mind, he is actively pursuing his efforts with a view to increasing steadily the number of human rights observers in the field, bearing in mind security conditions and the availability of voluntary contributions.

VI. CONTINGENCY PLANNING

44. As stated in my report to the Security Council of 15 August 1996 (S/1996/660), the Secretariat has entered into consultations with Member States in order to facilitate the establishment of contingency plans for Burundi. Although provisional plans have been drawn up for a peacekeeping operation based on a settlement involving all the parties, it is clear that the necessary conditions for the success of such an operation under Chapter VI of the Charter are not for the moment in place. Furthermore, in the absence of a technical field assessment the Secretariat does not have the necessary information for drawing up detailed plans. However, in accordance with paragraph 12 of resolution 1072 (1996) the Secretariat has kept updated, as far as possible, the various aspects of its provisional plans for a possible peacekeeping operation.

45. The Secretariat's contacts with Member States and the responses which it received are described in paragraphs 38 to 43 of my report of 15 August 1996. In this section of the report, I described how the Secretariat studied two scenarios for an operation pursuant to Chapter VII of the Charter. The first scenario, set out in detail in my report of 15 February (S/1996/116), consisted of a multinational force planned, organized and led by a State or group of States having a recognized rapid-response capacity.

46. Since this proposal did not obtain the necessary support from Member States, an alternative was put forward which proposed the deployment of a United Nations force mandated by the Security Council and financed by statutory contributions. This proposal was prompted by the wish to deal with the issues left unanswered in the proposal for a multinational force, such as the command and funding of the operation. However, as stated in paragraph 43 of my previous report (S/1996/660), this proposal was no more successful than the first one. Only five Governments out of the 31 contacted by the Secretariat sent replies. Four of the replies were negative. The Secretariat's approaches have secured no other response since then.

47. In the meantime, in accordance with the communiqué of 31 July 1996 of the Second Arusha Regional Summit on Burundi, which called for more coordination and better cooperation between the United Nations, OAU and the countries of the region, on 6 September 1996 the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations wrote to the Tanzanian Government in its capacity as Chairman of the Technical Military Committee established at the First Arusha Summit. The purpose of this communication was to offer United Nations military expertise for the elaboration of a security assistance plan in Burundi, as envisaged at the First Arusha Summit. During my discussions with President Nyerere on the occasion of his recent visit to New York he reiterated his conviction that such security assistance would be necessary in the future both in the case of a

political settlement of the situation and in the case of a massive outbreak of violence.

48. I remain convinced that the worst could happen in Burundi at any moment. I am extremely worried about the reports of the killing of thousands of Burundians since the coup d'état of 25 July 1996. As a result I am continuing to encourage the countries which have the military and logistical capacity for contributing to the necessary preparations to stand ready to take the necessary measures to prevent a disaster similar to the 1994 genocide in Rwanda from happening in Burundi. In these circumstances I support the initiative taken recently by the United States to strengthen the capacity of the African countries to contribute to peacekeeping activities and to react promptly to crises in Africa. I understand that the United States has begun consultations with OAU, with African and European countries and with a number of other States. I hope that this initiative will receive the necessary logistical and financial support to provide a credible reaction in the event of a serious crisis endangering civilian populations. Although the initiative is not aimed at any particular country and the determination of its practical modalities will take some time, it is not incompatible with my own convictions with respect to preventive action in reaction to the emergence of a crisis, in Burundi or elsewhere.

VII. OBSERVATIONS

49. Civil war continues to rage in Burundi. Despite the apparent lull following the coup d'état of 25 July 1996, violence has unfortunately reasserted itself very quickly. It is estimated that there have been over 10,000 casualties of the civil war since the coup d'état. It is therefore more imperative than ever to get the process of negotiations well under way, for only this can offer any hope of an end to the fratricidal conflict in Burundi.

50. A glimmer of hope appeared at the Arusha Regional Summit on 12 October 1996. On that occasion, the regional heads of State and delegations received a solemn pledge from the two main leaders who are parties to the conflict, Mr. Buyoya and Mr. Nyangoma, to start negotiations immediately and without conditions.

51. Taking note of those two solemn pledges, the Summit decided to adopt a strict timetable for the launching of negotiations within one month, i.e. by 12 November 1996. The Summit also decided that the preparatory phase for those negotiations should begin immediately, under the direction of the facilitator, President Nyerere, and ordered a ministerial mission to be sent to Bujumbura. The mission took place on 18 October. Lastly, the regional heads of State declared their readiness to respond positively to any serious opening of a dialogue between the new regime in Bujumbura and the parties involved in the conflict, by re-evaluating the imposition of sanctions.

52. Burundi is therefore again at a crossroads. The next few weeks could be crucial. The key question is whether the parties to the conflict will succeed in embarking on a serious process of negotiation. Accordingly, the international community must continue to exert pressure to ensure implementation of the programme of action adopted by the Arusha Summit on 12 October 1996.

53. In paragraph 7 of its resolution 1072 (1996), the Security Council requested me, in consultation with the international community, to undertake preparations when appropriate for the convening of a pledging conference to assist in the reconstruction and development of Burundi following the achievement of a comprehensive political settlement. In the absence of such a settlement, I am afraid that the convening of such a conference will have to wait. I am, however, continuing my consultations with Member States on this subject.

54. With respect to contingency planning, I remain convinced that the worst might yet occur in Burundi and that, consequently, the attention of the international community must continue to be focused on the development of the situation in that country. Although there does not yet seem to be sufficient political will for resolute preventive action, that does not rule out the possibility of a decision by the international community to act if a large-scale ethnic conflict breaks out. Such being the case, I see no alternative but to continue with contingency planning, while remaining deeply convinced that the international community will do its utmost to prevent another genocide.

55. The situation in eastern Zaire, which has steadily deteriorated since the incidents in Masisi in June 1996, is becoming particularly alarming because the violence now affects the entire province of Kivu. I am extremely worried by the recent charges and countercharges between Burundi, Rwanda and Zaire, which went so far as to implicate UNHCR and certain non-governmental organizations. That is why I twice dispatched to Zaire my Special Envoy, Mr. Ibrahima Fall. The recent incidents not far from the Burundi frontier, and the movements of Hutu refugees, which are becoming increasingly difficult to control, serve as a reminder to the international community that there are now all the ingredients present for a regionalization of a conflict that would engulf the entire Great Lakes region. It is more necessary than ever to convene the regional conference on peace, security and development of the Great Lakes region, which has been under discussion for several years. I sincerely hope that Member States will take a decision to that end without further delay.